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POLITICS & GOVERNMENT

Milwaukee's DNC attracted wide array of activists and demonstrations

BY: ISIAH HOLMES - AUGUST 24, 2020 7:00 AM



📷 Protesters, activists, and residents gather to march on the DNC in Milwaukee Wisconsin, August 20th. (Photo by Isiah Holmes)

Although the Democratic National Convention (DNC) became a scaled down event with mostly virtual presentations, groups of protesters nevertheless made their presence and causes known.

During both the day and nighttime hours, activists and organizers from a wide range of groups held marches, rallies, and demonstrations, hoping to grab the attention of the Democratic Party. It all came to a head on the convention's final day, Aug. 20,

when hundreds of people from a variety of groups took part in the March on the DNC.

The demonstrations took place despite the fact that presidential candidate Joe Biden and his Vice President pick Kamila Harris chose not to attend the convention in person. Many of the protesters expressed their disillusionment with the Democratic Party and its platform.

Ryan Hamann, chairman of the Coalition to March on the DNC, criticized the nominee for not showing up. “When we learned that Joe Biden decided to stay home rather than face COVID-19, or the movement for Black lives in the City of Milwaukee, I’d be lying if I said we weren’t at least a little disappointed. But we understood that whether Biden and his ruling-class friends came to Milwaukee or not, a number of key things about our situation remain the same.”



Signs were left in the night by Extinction Rebellion and other groups. (Photo by Isiah Holmes)



Photo's taken during the second day of the DNC. Extinction Rebellion had chalked the DNC grounds late the prior night. Wisconsin Examiner would run into them the following night. (Photo by Isiah Holmes)



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Whether it's poverty, the pandemic's toll on working people or systemic racism, organizers came to highlight the continued struggles plaguing their communities. Many of the issues they raised pre-date President Donald Trump's administration. Calling for an end to police violence became the demonstrators' theme on

the convention's last night. Hundreds of people gathered at Red Arrow Park to rally and listen to speakers, most of whom were family members of people who died at the hands of police. Red Arrow Park was the place where a Milwaukee officer killed Dontre Hamilton, 31, in 2014. His mother, Maria Hamilton, was part of the march on the DNC and joined the other families.

Mourning, catharsis, and truth

One by one, the loved ones of 17-year-old Alvin Cole, 25-year-old Jay Anderson Jr., 25-year-old Joel Acevedo, 28-year-old Isaiah Tucker, 31-year-old Dontre Hamilton, 26-year-old Jonathan Tubby, and others spoke to the crowd. While some of the families have spoken often and loudly about the controversy surrounding their respective cases, for others, this was their first time speaking out publicly.

Fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters and cousins, gave vent to tearful, raw emotion. Shortly before the families had an opportunity to speak, right-wing counter-protesters arrived and had a brief but tense verbal exchange with rally-goers. Police on horseback arrived and separated the two groups.

“We were created to love and help one another, not kill one another,” José Acevedo, the father of Joel Acevedo, told the crowd. “We’re not anti-police. We’re anti-killer-police that kills the innocent people for no reason. Those are not the bad apples. They call them bad apples. I call them crooked cops.”

The father of Joel Acevedo speaks out



Acevedo **was killed** by off-duty Milwaukee Police Department (MPD) officers during a house party held during and in violation of the state's Safer at Home order. Officer Michael Mattioli, 32, faces a charge of first-degree reckless homicide for the death, and up to 40 years in prison, with another 20 years on supervision. Mattioli, however, has not been fired from MPD. Acevedo's death contributed to months of protest in Milwaukee, which ultimately resulted in the demotion of Chief Alfonso Morales to captain. Michael Brunson, formerly the assistant chief of police, will hold the seat until a new chief is appointed.

Cassandra Tucker, mother of Isaiah Tucker, also spoke during the rally. Like the other family members, the still-grieving mother choked back her emotions as she told her son's story. The 28-year-old was shot 11 times by an Oshkosh police officer, who claims Tucker attempted to flee in a car. Wisconsin's Department of Justice (DOJ) investigated the shooting and cleared the officers of wrongdoing.

The story of Isaiah Tucker's killing



"I saw my son's last breath," said his mother, recounting the video she'd been provided of the incident by authorities. "I know that there has to be justice some way, somehow. It doesn't matter if you're Black, white, green, yellow, it doesn't matter! These are our children! Our brothers, our sisters! ... we can't replace them. "

Not all the speakers were family members of victims of police violence. Numerous activists also spoke, including Chicago activist Frank Chapman, an organizer with the Chicago Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression. "I've been listening to these stories for over 50 years, that's about how long I've been in the movement.

And the stories never change that much. People being murdered by the cops. People being disrespected by the police. People being brutalized by the police. People complaining about the police being racist. People complaining about them being Ku Klux Klan. It's been the same story, believe me. For 50 years, I'm only 77."



The march on the DNC in Milwaukee, August 20th, 2020. (Photo by Isiah Holmes)



Fliers from various groups were hung all over the city. (Photo by Isiah Holmes)



Protesters gather for the march on the DNC during the last day of the convention. (Photo by Isiah Holmes)



The families of people who've lost loved ones to police violence. They included the families of Alvin Cole, Jay Anderson Jr., Joel Acevedo, Isaiah Tucker, Jonathan Tubby, and others. (Photo by Isiah Holmes)



Protesters gather to listen to the families of people who've died due to police violence before the march on the DNC. (Photo by Isiah Holmes)



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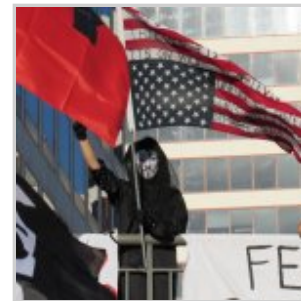
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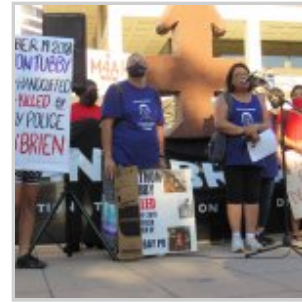
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The family of
Jonathan Tubby
speaks before the
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A group of
anonymous protesters
conduct street theater.

due to police violence before the march on the DNC. (Photo by Isiah Holmes)



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The march on the DNC in Milwaukee, August 20th, 2020. (Photo by Isiah Holmes)



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The march on the DNC in Milwaukee, August 20th, 2020.



Maria Hamilton, the mother of Dontre Hamilton, was at the front line of the



The march on the DNC in Milwaukee, August 20th, 2020.

(Photo by Isiah Holmes)

march on the DNC. Dontre was killed in Red Arrow Park by a Milwaukee PD officer in 2014. (Photo by Isiah Holmes)

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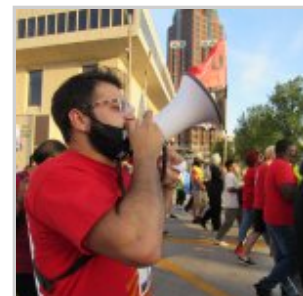
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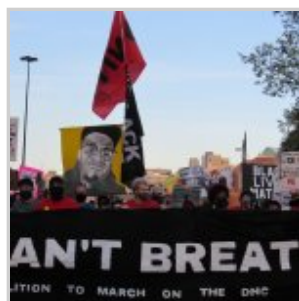
The march on the DNC in Milwaukee, August 20th, 2020.
(Photo by Isiah Holmes)



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Jay Sr., the father of Jay Anderson Jr., and his wife Linda were in the march on the DNC. Anderson was killed in 2016 by a Wauwatosa officer who's killed three people in five years. Alvin Cole was another of the officer's shootings.
(Photo by Isiah Holmes)



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Jay Anderson Sr. (left)
and Linda Anderson
(right), the parents of

(Photo by Isiah Holmes)



The march on the DNC in Milwaukee, August 20th, 2020.
(Photo by Isiah Holmes)

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The march on the DNC in Milwaukee, August 20th, 2020.
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Jay Anderson Jr.
(Photo | Isiah Holmes)



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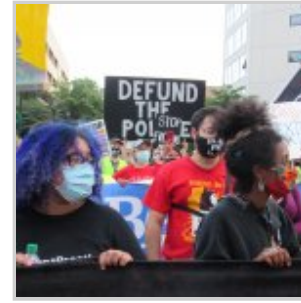
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Chapman and others at the rally have been pushing for ways to ensure there's community control over the police and greater accountability. Although Milwaukee has a civilian-led Fire and Police Commission (FPC), controversy has attached to its members. Minutes after the FPC demoted Chief Morales, its own chairman, Steven DeVougas, stepped down due to ongoing and unrelated conflict of interest investigations.

A wide coalition of causes

The March on the DNC brought together numerous activist groups with different causes. Many of them held actions throughout the week. The climate change organization Extinction Rebellion chalked messages and slogans on the police barricades and harangued Secret Service agents through megaphones. .

Natasha Winkler, one of the Extinction Rebellion activists, called America's climate policy "criminal inaction."

“The time is too late, we need drastic action now. And I have yet to hear of any candidate who’s willing to take drastic action,” she said. Winkler, who is almost 40 and has three children, said the future for generations weighs heavily on her mind. “The future of this planet is really important for me, leaving this for future generations. And our inaction has already brought us to a tipping point,” she said.



Natasha Winkler,
Extinction Rebellion
(Photo by Isiah
Holmes)



Extinction Rebellion
stands outside the
DNC security gates
and speaks to officers
and Secret Service
agents using a
loudspeaker. They’d
prepared a speech.
(Photo by Isiah
Holmes)



A upside down flag
Extinction Rebellion
made. (Photo by Isiah
Holmes)



A upside down flag
Extinction Rebellion
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Members of
Extinction Rebellion
strike some poses.
(Photo by Isiah
Holmes)



Extinction Rebellion
placed fliers all over
town, from the east
side of Milwaukee to
the DNC grounds in
the downtown area.
(Photo by Isiah
Holmes)



Groups of protesters, from Extinction Rebellion to anti-war groups, join one another in a small demonstration at outside the gates. (Photo by Isiah Holmes)



Groups of protesters, from Extinction Rebellion to anti-war groups, join one another in a small demonstration at outside the gates. (Photo by Isiah Holmes)



Groups of protesters, from Extinction Rebellion to anti-war groups, join one another in a small demonstration at outside the gates. They had a variety of signs. (Photo by Isiah Holmes)



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Groups of protesters, from Extinction Rebellion to anti-war groups, join one another in a small demonstration at outside the gates of the Democratic National Convention (DNC) of 2020. They had a variety of signs. (Photo | Isiah Holmes)



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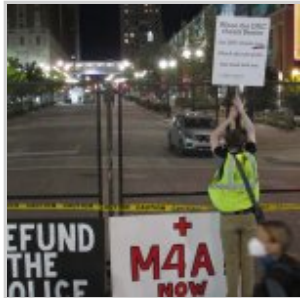
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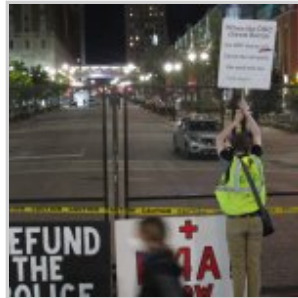
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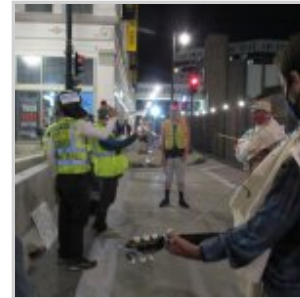
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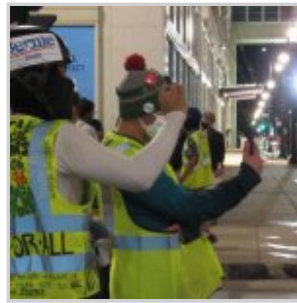
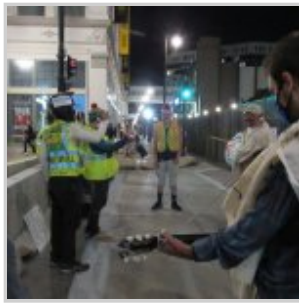
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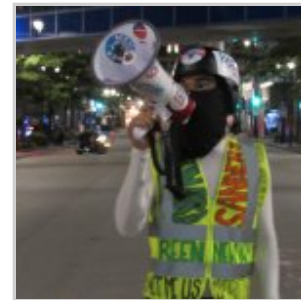
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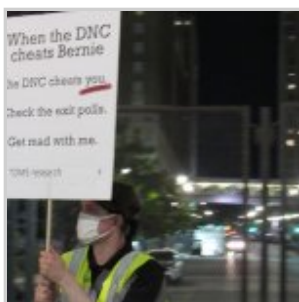
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Various groups placed posters, fliers, and propaganda around the city. (Photo by Isiah Holmes)

Protesters gather and honor the Black Sting Triage Ensemble as they prepare to play. (Photo by Isiah Holmes)

Protesters gather outside the DNC during the third night of the convention. (Photo by Isiah Holmes)



Protesters gather outside the DNC during the third night

Fliers from various groups were hung all

Fliers from various groups were hung all

of the convention.
(Photo by Isiah
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Fliers from various
groups were hung all
over the city. (Photo
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Members of
Extinction Rebellion
strike some poses.
(Photo | Isiah Holmes)

Fellow Extinction Rebellion activist Myra Jansky, 22, told *Wisconsin Examiner* during the third night of the DNC that the climate crisis has compelled her to not have children. “I had a dream that I had a baby one time, and I felt more love than I’ve felt in my whole life, but I just won’t let it happen. Because the world they’d be born into would be absolutely disastrous.” The United Nations and other international organizations have warned that humanity has less than 12 years to mitigate climate change or face [catastrophic consequences](#).

During the night and daytime hours, different groups peppered the DNC with their own flavors of organizing. [The Black Strings Triage Ensemble](#), known for playing in the wake of instances of police violence, set up in the street. Another social justice group, [Break the Silence in the Burbs](#), marched to the DNC a day before August 20. The group focuses on raising awareness of social justice issues in suburban communities.

On August 20, shortly before the large march began, groups gradually filled the streets around the DNC. Activists rallied and protested [mass incarceration](#) in Milwaukee, and the treatment of people within the [Milwaukee Secure Detention Facility](#) (MSDF). The state-ran facility has become a symbol of the ills of mass incarceration. The immigrant-rights group Voces de la Frontera also joined the rally and march.

Voces executive director Christine Neumann-Ortiz spoke in front of a Department of Homeland Security building in Milwaukee.

“It was disappointing that Biden and Harris didn’t come to the DNC, at least them. And here you have Trump chitting up his racist base all over the state,” she said “And what really lifted my heart was the march, and all of you.” Whereas the Democratic candidates opted for virtual presentations, Trump, Vice President Mike Pence, and the president’s son Eric Trump, all made in-person visits to Wisconsin during the convention week.

The March on the DNC



“What this march represented to me is hope,” said Neumann-Ortiz. “Hope because it’s the movement. It’s the movement that’s going to defeat fascism in the November elections. And it’s the movement that is going to hold a new administration accountable for the changes that we need.” Neumann-Ortiz declared August 20 a day of celebration for all social justice movements across the state. “We should celebrate it,” she said, standing before the DHS building. “Because we are at a historic movement in the fight against racism.”



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ISIAH HOLMES



Isiah Holmes is a journalist and videographer, and a lifelong resident of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. His writing has been featured in Urban Milwaukee, Isthmus, Milwaukee Stories, Milwaukee Neighborhood News Services, Pontiac Tribune, the Progressive Magazine, Al Jazeera, and other outlets.

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